More Than Just Meetings: Friendship and Connections at The SWI

When people think of the Scottish Woman's Institutes (SWI), they often imagine craft shows and baking competitions. But for those on the inside, the SWI is above all a catalyst for unexpected connections, meeting local personalities and lifelong friendships.

My own journey with the SWI took off when I joined the Angus Federation Committee. Getting involved beyond local meetings opened a whole new social circle. Working alongside women from across the region, shared tasks quickly turned into shared laughs and soon, into some of my closest, most trusted friendships.

Of course, the SWI network expands far beyond its official membership. During a Rural outing I crossed paths with a remarkable, vibrant, local personality, someone who isn't actually an SWI member, but whose energy and warmth made us instant friends. This proves how the SWI acts as a hub, drawing together the broader community and creating ties that go well beyond local meetings.

Sometimes, the SWI connection happens in the most unexpected places. While attending a work event in Perth, I found myself chatting with the acclaimed Scottish author and storyteller Jess Smith. As we talked, Jess mentioned she had just given a talk at an SWI meeting near Lauder.

Naturally, my face lit up. I told her "I'm an SWI member too!".

That serendipitous conversation quickly turned into a plan. Inspired by her passion for traditional Scottish folklore, I wasted no time booking Jess to speak at our own institute. Her subsequent visit was an unforgettable highlight for our members, bringing rich narrative history and captivating energy right to our doorstep.

From Federation Committees to chance meetings at work, my experience proves that the real heart of "the Rural" will always be the incredible people you meet along the way.

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